

IRELAND, SCOTLAND AND ULSTER.

Why has the Union with Scotland been a success, the Union with Ireland a failure? The question was put by that eminent Unionist, Professor A. V. Dicey, in an article written for the *Fortnightly Review*, as long ago as August, 1881.

"To the average Englishman's conception," says Professor Dicey, "the difference of results lies in the difference between Scotch and Irish character." Yet this view, so popular and so plausible, is dismissed by him as "a gross misrepresentation of past events which can be confuted by a simple reference to facts which lie on the very surface of history."

Why did the Scotch Union succeed? "First, because the Act of Union embodied what was, not in name only, but in reality, a treaty or contract freely made between two independent states." Scotland accepted a bargain, made for her by ministers of her own choosing, after full deliberation, in which her material interests were richly secured. She gave up her independence; she secured full participation in the advantages of English trade. Her violent discontent and dislike to the loss of independence was worn away by a prosperity steadily growing. Before the Union, Scotland was excluded from the English colonial trade. After the Union she enjoyed and profited to the full by all its vast opportunities.

But (again in Professor Dicey's words), **"The Union with Ireland lacked all that element of free consent between independent contracting parties which lies at the basis of every genuine contract."** Of the deliberate negotiation, of the calm, satisfactory, business-like haggling for national advantages, which marked the negotiations between the Scotch and the English Commissioners; of the close consideration of minute details by competent representatives of both countries, there is not a trace in the negotiations, if negotiations they can be called, between England and Ireland."

There was plenty of haggling over the details of individual bribes: none over the interests of the country. What were the driving forces? "One or two facts are patent—the Irish Protestants were dazed with horror at the massacres of the Rebellion; the Irish Catholics were lulled into acquiescence by promises which were made only to be broken; no appeal was made to the Irish constituencies; and the members of both Houses of Parliament were corrupted. **The Act of Union was, in short, an agreement which, could it have been referred to a court of law, must at once have been cancelled as a contract hopelessly tainted with fraud and corruption.**"

That is the first cause. Secondly, the Union with Scotland was carried out in a wholly different spirit. **"Favour was shown throughout to the weaker nation; the Scotch, from a merely mercantile point of view, got by far the best of the bargain."**

In Ireland the case was far different. After a century of legislation directed expressly against every industry that competed with any English interest, Ireland had, in 1782, achieved at once commercial and legislative freedom. In gaining independence, Ireland gained also those very privileges of free participation in oversea trade which Scotland sacrificed

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1908 her independence to acquire. **The corrupt aristocracy which sold Ireland's freedom sold also the charter of that right to protect and foster her own industrial life,** under which the growth of manufacturing industry had been so swift.

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"Thirdly," says Professor Dicey, **"the institutions for which Scotchmen seriously cared were maintained or secured by the Union. . . . The one great national institution—the Church of Scotland—derived new security and greatly increased power from the means which politically amalgamated Scotland and England."** More generally, he adds, "the result of the respect paid to Scotch institutions was that, while Scotland became an inseparable part of Great Britain, **Scotch affairs remained after, even more than before, the Union, under the control of Scotland."**

Contrast this with Ireland. The Church of Ireland, indeed, was secured, but it was not the Church of the Irish people. Godolphin ensured to the Scotch a cherished institution. Pitt buttressed up in Ireland an alien anomaly. More significant still: "The destruction of the Parliament which met in College Green was a more difficult thing at bottom than the destruction of the Parliament which met in Edinburgh. The assembly which sat in Dublin had what the Scotch Parliament had not, strong claims on the sentimental interests of the people whom it represented; it had vindicated national independence; it had freed Irish commerce; it had produced within the twenty years preceding its death a brilliant body of statesmen and orators; it had become, in short, a centre of national life."

"Nor was political amalgamation with the United Kingdom compensated for by local independence. Ireland since, as before, the Union has been governed in the main in accordance with English notions, applied in many cases, or misapplied, by English officials."

Hear now the summing up:—

"Neither Scotch nor Irish history can, except by the misreading of past events, be forced into teaching the lesson that the failure of the policy in Ireland is due to the peculiarities of Irish character. It is vain to attribute to the characteristics of any people consequences which can be explained by the neglect on the part of statesmen to make their policy conform to the nature of things."

Professor Dicey advocates closer Union; he would desire to abolish the Viceroyalty as a symbol of separation. Does he think, does any man think, that such measures would lead to peace and prosperity in Ireland? The fruitful analogy is to be found, not in the Scotch Union, but in the free colonial relation within the Empire.

II.

It has already been shown (on excellent Unionist authority) that those are mistaken who declare that if Ireland does not prosper under the Union, Ireland is to blame, since Scotland under a similar Union enjoys prosperity. **The comparison so often made between Ulster and the rest of Ireland is equally fallacious.** The industrial success of the Protestant north-east is held to prove that industrial backwardness elsewhere in Ireland is due to racial or religious shortcomings. The answer must be given again by reference to historic facts; and the critics who now reproach Irishmen with continually seeking in ancient history for the cause of present evils may be asked in their turn, how far back must one go to trace the foundations of England's commercial prosperity? Will anyone deny that the work of statesmen during the eighteenth

century was potent in laying those foundations deep and broad? This at least, cannot be denied, that legislation can ruin, if it cannot create; and in that century enactment after enactment was directed against the growth of industries in Ireland which would compete with those of the ruling country. **The first condition of success for the establishment of manufactures is the existence of the industrial habit in a population.** That habit is distinct from the virtue of industry; farmers will not readily adapt themselves to the conditions of factory life, though they may be far more industrious than artisans who add Monday to the Saturday and Sunday off. **The reason why there is a strong industrial population in north-east Ulster and nowhere else in Ireland is that here, and here only, the industrial habit was fostered through generations by the very causes which elsewhere killed it out.** Jealousy of Irish trade as a possible rival, jealousy of Irish Roman Catholicism as a possible danger, account for restrictive trade legislation and for the penal laws. But the linen trade, conceded as the one department in which England did not claim exclusively to herself, and deliberately planted among Protestants, was exempt from both these jealousies.

Ireland's natural industry was the woollen manufacture, as the raw material could be produced in all parts, and specially in the West; and in all parts this industry flourished so as to compete successfully with that of England. The result was a menacing agitation, and William III. promised to do his best to suppress the Irish woollen trade and to encourage the linen trade. The first pledge was the better kept; and the linen trade, even when helped, could not replace the other. It only existed in embryo. "England," says Miss Murray, in her work on the *Commercial Relations between England and Ireland*, "substituted a possible trade in the place of an established and flourishing one." Moreover, and here is the important point, when encouragement was given, it was given locally and sectionally.

In 1698 a French Protestant, Crommelin, was brought over and established at Lisburn, ten miles from Belfast, in a Protestant-settled district. Here the linen industry was started under State patronage and subsidy. It was not absolutely confined to the North. Huguenot weavers and spinners were allowed to settle in Waterford. But when Crommelin, in return for an extension of his patent, proposed to extend the industry to Leinster, "a fierce opposition arose," says Miss Murray, "because it was feared that Irish linen would replace Dutch in the English market, and, consequently, that Holland would no longer buy English woollens." In Cork, the manufacture of hemp into sailcloth developed, fostered by a bounty from the Irish Parliament. England, herself giving bounties on sailcloth, forced the withdrawal of the Irish bounty, so that the hempen manufacture of Southern Ireland was killed out by bounty-fed competition.

If it be asked why the linen trade did not spread south and west, the answer is, that it naturally grew, radiating round the centre where State aid had established it, in the Protestant north. Moreover, **special immunities were conferred by the Irish Parliament** (representing only Protestants) **on Protestant weavers**; while the Penal laws, which prohibited Catholics from purchasing land, from taking long and beneficial leases, or from lending money on real securities, prohibited them by consequence from embarking in manufacture. Thus the one industry which England permitted to develop in the country was virtually confined to Protestant enterprise; while, as for the artisans, Catholic weavers would have had to force their way into employment under Protestant masters and in competition with Protestant workers at a time when the

whole strength of the Government was devoted to fostering the Protestant interest.

Thus, **for three-quarters of a century, industrial capital, industrial enterprise, and the industrial habit among workers were concentrated in the north, from directly assignable legislative causes.** The wealthier Catholics turned their energies into retail trade; the poorer had no resource but work on the land. Yet the desire for a more varied industrial life was active; and when Ireland obtained for a few years the free control of her own resources, manufactures sprang up all over the country. Exports, which between 1704 and 1782 had risen from one to thirty-two index figures, rose, between 1782 and 1796, from thirty-two to eighty-eight. But then came the Union, and the infant industries were exposed, in the white war of commerce, to the unrestricted opposition of those powerful and jealous English trade interests which had been fed for a hundred years with the sacrifice of every competing Irish interest. For the linen trade only the change was no disadvantage. It had grown, under the relatively favourable conditions, strong enough to care for itself; and it successfully surmounted the change to modern conditions of machinery, just as did the cotton trade in Lancashire. But the newly-established industries had not the stamina to resist, and they disappeared rapidly, leaving the country bare of industrial resources over those parts of its extent.

Nor need it be denied that the machinery of the Penal Laws, so well fitted, in Burke's phrase, "to enslave and degrade a people," had produced its effect. The bent towards large productive ventures had been neutralised in Catholics during the century in which the accumulation of property, and the investment of money had been rendered so difficult for them; as for the poorer classes, they had been plunged in that morass of destitution where the faculties become paralysed and atrophied. **At the period of the suppression of the woollen trade and the imposition of the Penal Laws—simultaneous causes—Ulster was in no way industrially superior to the rest of Ireland. After the Union, this province alone was in possession of an industry which the State had fostered in its borders for a century, and possessed also all the habits and temper in employers and employed which arise from a long hereditary experience of manufacturing business.** It is not to be wondered that the natural lead thus given has been retained; and those who taunt the rest of Ireland with its inferiority might as well blame a man tied up for years because he fails to overtake a trained and hardy runner.

Every decade in its passage has only increased the superiority, which rests really in the possession of a trained population. Ship-building, for instance, has grown as a kind of complement to the linen industry, which, employing a disproportionate number of women, has made it specially easy to get men workers. But if Protestant Ulster had been obliged to face the competition which followed the Union, under such conditions as existed for the rest of Ireland, there is not the least reason to believe that manufactures could or would have been established in that province more than in any other.